

Things began to change in 1979 when Pope John Paul II, in his first official visit to his homeland, encouraged the people of Poland to be not afraid. Empowered by the Pope's words, Poles soon began standing up to their communist government.

On August 14, 1980, at the Lenin Shipyard in the Baltic port city of Gdansk, 17,000 workers staged a strike under the leadership of Lech Walesa. Initially formed as a response to increases in the price of food and a dismissal of several popular workers, the strike soon evolved into a broad demand for workers' rights.

In mid-August, 1980, an interfactory strike committee was established in Gdansk to coordinate rapidly spreading strikes there and elsewhere. Within a week, the committee presented the Polish Government with a list of 21 demands ranging from the right to join independent unions and an increase in the minimum wage to broader issues such as censorship.

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On September 22, 1980, Solidarity was formally established and became the first independent labor union in any Soviet bloc country. By early 1981 the trade union had a membership of about 10 million people and represented most of the workforce in Poland.

In the early 1980s, Solidarity was forcibly suppressed by the Communist government and Solidarity was declared illegal. Although the union was formally dissolved, it continued as an underground organization. Solidarity reemerged in 1989 to become the first opposition movement to participate in free elections in a post-Soviet bloc nation since the 1940s.

The case of Solidarity, the movement that ended communism in Poland without bloodshed, inspired other nations under Soviet control to do the same and led to the end of the Cold War.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the strikes in Poland. Let us remember Solidarity as the beginning of a great struggle that ended decades of oppression and tyranny in Eastern Europe and led to the establishment of democracy in Poland. We must recognize and forever remember the sacrifice, determination, and struggle that Poland endured to secure their freedom.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SCHWARZ of Michigan). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. NORWOOD addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. KOLBE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. KOLBE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### NATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, today we face a great national security challenge, many challenges in fact.

As we wage a global war on terror, we face an enemy that kills indiscriminately in its campaign against freedom, democracy and political pluralism. The brutal attacks in London just a couple of weeks ago and, of course, the other tragic news that we have gotten from London this week are a tragic reminder of the nature of the enemy that we face. But I believe that the true sign of our times is not the carnage of suicide bombers. It is the image of millions of Iraqis waiting in line to cast their first free votes, and millions more in Afghanistan, the Ukraine, Lebanon, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and on and on and on around the world.

Democracy is sprouting in places that seemed unthinkable and that has been the case for quite a while. The worldwide terror campaign that is being perpetrated and the rise of democracy in formerly inhospitable places are not unrelated. Just the opposite, in fact. The war that is being waged against political and economic freedom and our unwavering resolve to defeat it is pushing oppressed people to a tipping point. They are demanding the right to determine their own futures. And as President Bush has so clearly articulated, the spread of freedom is not just a consequence of the global war on terror. It is our best defense. That is, the spread of freedom is the most important thing that we can do for our national security. Those who embrace the democratic principles of liberty, opportunity and tolerance do not resort to terrorism. Aiding the establishment of democratic and free so-

cieties is squarely within our national interest.

To that end I have had the great privilege of working with our distinguished Speaker, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT), in the establishment of the House Democracy Assistance Commission. I have joined my colleague, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE) who is the ranking member of this task force.

The House Democracy Assistance Commission provides a forum for this body to play a significant and proactive role in establishing the strong, independent, transparent legislatures that are essential to a vibrant and healthy democracy. Our commission was established precisely because we realized that spreading freedom throughout the globe is as critical to preserving it right here at home because we realize that we cannot abandon anyone to tyranny.

Just a short time ago most of us could not have imagined millions of Iraqis turning out to vote. But there they were on January 30, defying the terrorists and the world's expectations of what would happen there.

Those of us who have been engaged with Central America over the past 2½ decades have been amazed by the transformation that has taken place there as well. Like their Iraqi counterparts, the people of Central America have made the journey from violence and oppression to democracy and freedom. Many of my colleagues will remember just how difficult that process was.

Two decades ago President Reagan and this body were deeply concerned about the threat posed to the United States by the communist expansion and civil war that existed in our own backyards. As the Cold War neared its fourth decade, violent conflict in El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras had the region in turmoil. Stability, let alone democracy, seemed absolutely unattainable.

Today the region is just as important, Mr. Speaker, to our national interests. But rather than a threat, Central America is an ally and a partner in trade, counter terrorism, drug interdiction, and migration control. Our Central American friends play a vital role in the security and well-being of the United States of America.

Again, for those who remember the struggle of the 1980s, this transformation is no less astounding than the one taking place at this very moment in Iraq. And our commitment to solidifying and strengthening the democratic institutions that are taking root there should be no less firm today than it was a decade and a half ago when this process began.

The people of Central America have embraced democracy, but they now expect concrete results from their democratically elected leaders, and rightly so. They must find new opportunities for prosperity and a higher standard of living or they will question the democratic institutions that have only recently brought peace to that region.